Debs Family

See: Archives for this collection

INVENTORY

The Eugene V. Debs Collection
Dates: 1832-1973
Donors: Ned A. Bush, Sr. and Marguerite Debs Cooper
Accession Number: 780605
Description: One Hollinger record storage box 15"x12"x10"; One phonorecord, separate 12¼"x12¼"; One 'Hollinger Box' 15¼"x10¼"x5" (legal size)

## Biography

Eugene V. Debs--five times a candidate for President on the Socialist ticket, advocate of industrial unionism, and tireless champion of the working class. Born in 1855 in Terre Haute, Indiana, Debs was introduced to the plight of the working man as a fireman on the railroad. He organized the first local lodge of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen in 1875, later becoming secretary-treasurer of the national organization and editor of its magazine. He was elected city clerk of Terre Haute in 1883 and member of the Indiana House in 1885.

Dissatisfied with the parochial nature of the established trade unions, in 1893 Debs formed the American Railway Union, an industrial union which successfully struck the Great Northern Railway in 1894, but which less successfully confronted the Pullman Car Company in the same year, a strike that earned Debs both national recognition and a jail sentence. In 1897 he transformed the moribund A.R.U. into the Social Democratic Party of America (later the Socialist Party of America) and ran unsuccessfully for President on its ticket in 1900 and 1904. After helping found the International Workers of the World in 1905, Debs ran for President again in 1908 and 1912. Declining to run in 1916, he spent much of his time writing for numerous Socialist publications and lecturing. Debs' vehement opposition to U.S. entry into World War I secured him another jail term, for violation of the Espionage Act, and in 1920 from the Atlanta prison, he ran for President for the last time. Released in 1921 by President Warren Harding, Debs spent the rest of his life lecturing and writing. He died in Elmhurst, Illinois, in 1926.

## Content and Scope of Collection

The miscellaneous materials that constitute this collection include three original documents concerning Debs's ancestry; pamphlets, booklets, and newspaper and other articles about Debs; booklets and articles about socialism; writings by Debs; several photographs.

Some of the items are originals; others are xeroxed copies of originals which are located at the Debs Foundation.

The collection is chiefly in one record storage box (A), with legal-size papers located in a separate document case (B). An unboxed phonorecord is labeled C. The inventory sheet in Box A provides a description of the entire collection. The materials will be found in Box A unless a cross reference indicates that an item is in Box B.

## I. Materials about Debs

I. Folder 1, Box B
Marriage certificate of Sebastian Bettrich and Francoise Wagner, 1860 (Manuscript in French)

Genealogy of Bettrich-Wagner family, n.d. (Manuscript in French)

Death certificate of Victoire Mueller, 1832 (Manuscript in French)

I. Folder 2 - Souvenir volume of Golden Wedding Anniversary of Jean Daniel Debs and Marguerite Marie Bettrich, Debs's parents. Terre Haute, Indiana, September 13, 1899

I. Folder 3 - Hankins, John Erskine. "Katherine Metzel Debs: A Reminiscence," The Kansas Magazine, 1949

I. Folder 4 - Biographical essay by Anna Sherwood who attended Debs's funeral, 1926

Morris, Charles R. "The Life Story of Eugene V. Debs," Terre Haute Advocate, Dec. 19, 1969

I. Folder 5A - Pamphlets, booklets,leaflets

a. Debs, Theodore. "Sidelights: Incidents in the Life of Eugene V. Debs, 1973

b. "Eugene Victor Debs (1855-1955) The Centennial Year," Pub. Debs Centennial Committee, 1956

c. Condo, Rev. Samuel S. "Memorial Lecture on Eugene Victor Debs" n.d.

I. Folder 5B - Booklets

a. Kopelin, Louis. "The Life of Debs," People's Pocket Series No. 69, n.d.

b. Hurt, Walter. "Eugene V. Debs: An Introduction," n.d.

c. Claessens, August. "Eugene Victor Debs: A Tribute," 1946

I. Folder 5C

a. Le Prade, Ruth, ed., introd. by Upton Sinclair. "Debs and the Poets," 1920

b. Hollingsworth, J. H. "Eugene V. Debs: What His Neighbors Say of Him," n.d. (2 copies)

I. Folder 5D

a. "The Heritage of Debs: The Fight Against War," Socialist Party National Headquarters, 1935

b. Envelope containing: Lake, H.S. Genevra. "Poems of Justice, inscribed to Eugene V. Debs and the Social Democrats of the World," 1900; Swinton, John. "1860-Lincoln, Debs-1895," 1895; Riley, James Whitcomb. "Two Hoosier Poems: 'Terry Hut' and 'Them Flowers'"; Cooke, Edmund Vance. "Eugene"

c. "Eugene V. Debs," Tributes n.d.

I. Folder 6 - Robert Hunter letter to Lincoln Steffens (copy), and script of Hunter's article about Debs - from Lincoln Steffens Collection, Columbia Univ. Libraries

I. Folder 7 - Records from the files of the FBI concerning Debs, from the U.S. Department of Justice to Ned A. Bush, Sr. (Originals at the Debs Foundation)

I. Folder 8, Box B - Newspaper clippings about Debs's activities; his funeral (copies)

I. Folder 9 - Mini-cam, 30-minutes on Debs taped at Debs House by TV-10, broadcast on Face to Face January 24, 1976. Interviewer and narrator, Harry Frey; interviews with Shubert Sebree and Ned A. Bush, Sr.

I. Folder 10 - Tape - 55 minutes: "The Man from Terre Haute and His Cause"

I. Folder 11 - Biographical information from the clippings scrapbook of Theodore Debs, 1894-1897; 1932

a. "Mr. Debs' Reception" May 4, 1894, p. 1

b. "Mr. Debs' Stirring Speech" May 4, 1894, p. 2

c. "President Eugene Debs, President of the American Railway Union" p. 3

d. "The Central Figure of the Great Railroad Strike as Viewed by Nym Crinkle" July 1, 1894, p. 4

e. "Man About Town" July 7, 1894 p. 5

f. Articles re railroad strike July 7-11, 1894, p. 6,7

g. "Letters and Papers Seized at Union's Headquarters" July 11, 1894, p. 8

h. "Prison Life Is Still His Choice" July 19, 1894, p. 9
"Pres. Debs Appeals for Order" July 10, 1894, p. 9
"Meeting at Ogden's Grove" July 21, 1894, p. 9

i. "As Debs Tells the Story" July 21, 1984, p. 10

j. "His Views on Political Issues" Nov. 1, 1894, p. 11

k. "Debs and Erwin" Jan. 6, 1895, p. 12

l. Articles re Debs and the conspiracy cases and jail life March - July, 1895 p. 13-17

m. "The Coming Working Man" July 13, 1895, p. 18

n. "Prison and Pardon" Aug. 15, 1895, p. 19

o. "Received with Enthusiasm, Welcome to Debs" Nov. 23, 1895, p. 20

p. "A Tribute to E. V. Debs from Woodstock" Jan. 1, 1896, p. 20
Birmingham, Ala. - reception March 16, 1896

q. Articles on Debs's lectures, personality and his visit to the South, p. 21,22

r. "Debs in New Orleans" May 26, 1896, p. 23

s. "Mr. Debs at Springfield" p. 26

t. "Incidents, Sidelights in Life of Debs" Dec. 29, 1932,p. 27

I. Folder 12 - More clippings, 1894-1965

I. Folder 13 - Publications with important pieces about Debs and his work

a. "Debs At Canton - Extracts from his speech," Labor Defender, Dec. 1926, p. 205

b. "The Revolutionary Heritage of Eugene Victor Debs," James P. Cannon, Labor Defender, Dec. 1926, p. 210

c. "Debs--Lover of Men," John Haynes Holmes, Unity, Nov. 15, 1926, p. 165

d. "Gene Debs: The Life of a Man Unafraid," The Call, Debs Supplement, Nov. 1942, p. 1

e. "What Labor's Battle Taught Me," Eugene V. Debs, The Call, Nov. 1942, p. 2

f. "Who Was This Man Debs?" Norman Thomas, The Call, p. 3

g. "Gene Debs' Heritage to Us All," Harry Fleischman, The Call, Nov. 1942, p. 3

h. "Gene Debs: One of America's Greatest," Oswald Garrison Villard, The Call, Nov. 1942, p. 4

i. "As I Remember Gene Debs," Jessie Wallace Hughan, The Call, Nov. 1942, p. 4

I. Folder 14A - Articles by Dr. Bernard J. Brommel

a. "Advocate of Industrial Unionism," 1968

b. "Debs and Negro Rights"

c. "Debs's Cooperative Commonwealth Plan for Workers"

d. "Eugene V. Debs: The Agitator as Speaker," 1969 (Pub.)

e. "Eugene V. Debs: The Agitator as Speaker," 1969 (Unpub.)

f. "Eugene V. Debs: Blue-Denim Spokesman"

I. Folder 14B - Speeches, article, brochure

a. "1855 -- Eugene V. Debs -- 1926," Ned A. Bush, Sr. (Speech)

b. "A Short Course on the Life of Eugene Victor Debs," 1975 (brochure)

c. "Debs The Socialist," (paper for Short Course), Shubert Sebree

d. "Debs, The Unpurchasable," Ned A. Bush, Sr. (speech)

e. "I Remember Gene," Remarks of Martin H. Miller

f. "Anniversary Memorial Service," Ned A. Bush, Sr., 1976

g. "Betrayal in the West Virginia Coal Fields: Eugene V. Debs and the Socialist Party of America, 1912-1914," David A. Corbin, 1976

I. Folder 15 - Synopsis of play, 'Gene Debs: Victor!' by Charles B. Millholland, 1939 (copy). Play available at Debs Home

I. Folder 16 - Copy of CONSCIENCE OF AMERICA - THE YEARS BETWEEN by Arthur Holch, presented by DIRECTIONS as broadcast on ABC Television Network, Feb. 1, 1976. Also, PR materials and reviews:

a. Letter to Ned Bush from Arthur Holch

b. Feature entitled "The American Spirit" concerning importance of Debs in "The Years Between"

c. Letter from a viewer

d. Article from The Christian Science Monitor (review), Jan. 29, 1976

e. Letter about jail house doors in Woodstock, Illinois

f. "'Directions' Looks at Dissent, Debs," review article from Terre Haute Tribune-Star, Jan. 31, 1976: TV Entertainment Preview

II. Correspondence

II. Folder 1 - Letters to Debs from Theodore Dreiser and Theodore Debs (copies), and letters from Debs to James Whitcomb Riley (copies)

III. Materials by Debs

III. Folder 1

a. "Riley the Hoosier Poet and Interpreter," Pearson's Magazine, March 1917

b. "Recollections of Ingersoll," Pearson's Magazine, April, 1917

c. "The Old Umbrella Mender," The Coming Nation, March 1, 1913

III. Folder 2 - Political and social tracts (old leaflets and pamphlets)

a. National Platform Socialist Party (party literature)

b. "To the Women Voter" (party literature)

c. "Woman"

d. "Watch Your Leaders, Says Debs to Workers"

e. "Eugene V. Debs - The Voice of Labor: Extracts from His Address to the Jury at His Trial in Cleveland, Ohio"

III. Folder 3 - Booklets, pamphlets

Envelope 1

a. "Tribute of Love to his Father and Mother"

b. "Woman"

c. "Childhood"

d. Comment by EVD on "The Catholic Church and Socialism by Father Thomas McGrady," Wayland's Monthly, Dec., 1907

Envelope 2

a. "The Negro Workers"

b. "Debs and the War: His Canton Speech and His Trial in the Federal Court at Cleveland," Sept. 1918

III. Folder 4 - Booklets, pamphlets

Envelope 1

a. "Debs' Address to the Jury and Statement to the Court"

b. "Riley, Nye & Field - Personal Notes and Recollections"

c. Loose sheets with "Sacco and Vanzetti, An Appeal to American Labor"; reviews of Upton Sinclair's The Jungle and The Brass Check with statements by Debs

IV. Photographs

IV. Folder 1

Envelope 1 - Photo of E. V. Debs as a young man by H. T. Biel, photographer

Envelope 2 - Debs home - n.d.

Envelope 3 - The 'Bedford' locomotive n.d.

V. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

V. Folder 1 - Clippings from Terre Haute newspapers that chronicle the historic background of the Foundation and record special occasions, 1962-1963

V. Folder 2 - Clippings, 1964-1971

V. Folder 3 - Flyer, brochures about Debs home from the Debs Foundation

VI. Materials about Organized Labor, Socialism

VI. Folder 1 - The Bulletin, March 20, 1920

VI. Folder 2 - Clippings - "Review of Labor's Efforts in State for Betterment of Conditions," Oct. 25, 1925 (Debs not mentioned)

VI. Folder 3 - Campaign literature, 1912 (copies)

VI. Folder 4 - Article about Norman Thomas, SR/April 12, 1969 (Debs mentioned)

VI. Folder 5 - Descriptions of phonorecords featuring Joe Glazer (copies)

VI. Folder 6 - Phonorecord "C" - Union Train, Joe Glazer, Collector Records

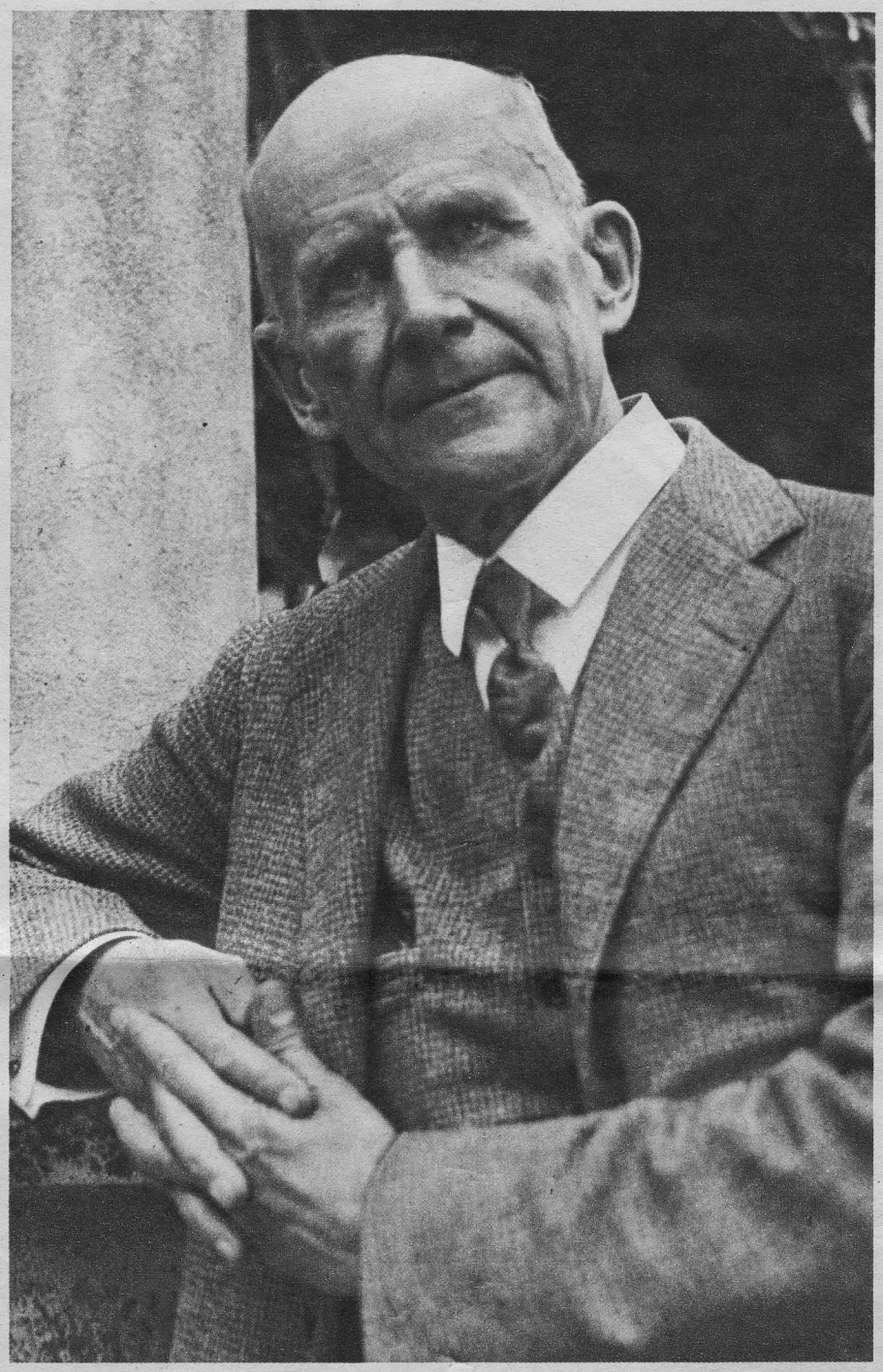
VI. Folder 7 - Envelopes - leaflets, booklets

1. "Mother Jones"; "Socialism"; "Social Democracy"; "Socialist Party Platform"

2. "Constitution of the American Railway Union"; "A Quarter Century of Solidarity - A History of Local 662 United Auto Workers," AFL-CIO Anderson, Indiana

VI. Folder 8, Box B
Library Bulletin, Nov. 1961 and Dec. 1961, The Tamiment Institute Library; labor songs - words only

GEN.



Eugene V. Debs—"We never know anyone until they are dead."

# DEBS: *Radical In Retrospect*

*By*

***FRED D. CAVINDER***

THE FRAME house is flanked on two sides by parking lots, auto wheels setting up a dust screen. Shadowed and dwarfed by the structures of Indiana State University, the white home cringes on a miniscule plot of grass sparsely colored by a few blooms. Like the memory of the man who lived there, the house seems to cling by its fingernails to a ledge over the abyss of forgotten history.

The sign outside says "The Home of Eugene V. Debs."

Inside, where the atmosphere of the past descends around tiled fireplaces nestled in carved mantels, memorabilia packs the chambers: a room dedicated to the Reuthers; one to the Indiana AFL-CIO; another to John L. Lewis, whose bushy-eyed portrait surveys what was Kate Debs' bedroom; yellowed notes from Terre Haute newspapers; a craggy bust of Norman Thomas, and piles of paperbound books entitled "Eugene V. Debs, The Making of an American Radical."

**Continued on Page 74**

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

# DEBS:

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The Debs home in Terre Haute is nearly surrounded by parking lots and Indiana State University buildings. Foes of Debs considered the house pretty elegant.

The last office Debs had in Terre Haute was this one on busy U.S. 40. Now it is a barbershop. Furnishings from the office are in the restored Debs house.

Debs, self-styled champion of the working class, founded the first industrial union in the nation. Overcoming lack of education with a good memory and an affinity for his audience, he traversed the nation with a stream of rhetoric for social reform. He was a founder of the Social Democratic Party and five times was presidential candidate for the socialists, including once as the only contender to campaign from prison.

In the retrospect of 100 years, Debs is a nostalgic example of how difficult it becomes to tell a radical without a program. Current events historians must be plagued by the knowledge that a century from now the formula by which Debs and his peers are evaluated will be applied to today's battling radicals and conservatives.

PEOPLE ARE burning the flag and being clucked at, congressmen are publicly assailing the nation's war policy — Debs went to jail for making a speech which now wouldn't rate attention. (He advocated free speech even for the people *he* considered radicals.)

The Federal government takes care of the populace (the success of it may be argued) through Social Security and Medicare — Debs was considered a reactionary for seeking such welfare boons.

Union workers (organized nationally, just as Debs always urged them to be) are working in many areas for a reduction in a 35-hour work week — Debs was a far-out visionary who thought a 40-hour week was possible.

Some feminist groups urge escalating the battle of the sexes to a full scale war over equal job and pay right — Debs held the then laughable view that women should be allowed to vote.

The age of violence sees fire and fists in the streets — Debs was considered a little odd by some contemporary radicals for resisting firebrands and opposing triumph to the accompaniment of blood.

Only Debs' home, and his niece, remain from those blustery days when the formation of unionism focused the national spotlight on the banks of Indiana's Wabash. Even the niece, Mrs. Marguerite Debs Cooper, who lived through the days when her father and uncle were national celebrities in a controversial era, finds today's world fast and uncertain.

"IT WOULD be hard to say what either Dad or Uncle would think," she muses. "I'm having rather a hard time adjusting to some of the situations today. Our world is a changing world, but sometimes when you've lived as long as I have it's a little hard to adjust to it."

Being a member of the Debs family in those bygone days "didn't faze me a bit," she recalls. "I don't know that it made any difference all my life. Of course, a lot of the people here in the early days didn't believe in what Gene did. But I don't feel any different now that I was related to somebody who was prominent."

In retrospect, Mrs. Cooper does pinpoint when the Debs philosophy turned from radicalism to accepted normalcy.

"When Roosevelt (Franklin D.) took over, they took over the socialist platform," she reminisces. "And he (Dad) said at the time, socialism will never come out in socialism, it will have to come out in another name. Roosevelt took practically the whole platform and called it the New Deal."

The "Dad" to whom Mrs. Cooper refers, was Theodore Debs, a brother who was just like Eugene in both appearance and philosophy. During one presidential campaign, in fact, Theodore silently posed as his brother on the platform of the Red Special, Debs' campaign train, while it was announced that a failing voice had forced cancellation of the scheduled speech. Eugene Debs, meanwhile, rested inside the train, gathering the strength which gradually failed him in the twilight of his political life.

"He didn't have to come out and say what he thought of Gene. We all knew that. Gene came first. He worshiped his brother," Mrs. Cooper says of her father.

CURIOUSLY, in a family life filled with curiosities, Mrs. Cooper had little contact with Gene Debs, or even her own father, during the hectic years. She and her mother lived in Terre Haute, providing a link by mail with the Debs brothers as they ranged across the nation on union business and in socialist causes.

Even that mail link was frail. "Our notes were very short because they didn't have time," she recalls. "Mother and I went up to the office and forwarded all the mail to them and they answered all that correspondence. They would drop us a line, or Dad would send a postal from here and there." (Postal cards Gene sent Kate carried a drawing of a duck, for "Ducky," his term of endearment for his wife.)

Mrs. Cooper seldom was in her uncle's home. Kate Debs wasn't the family dinner type. "She was a very reserved person," says Mrs. Cooper. "Very reserved. It was not

an atmosphere that a young person would particularly come into. If we came to see Gene we walked from our home (in Southeast Terre Haute) and we walked back home again. That's a good walk."

In guiding restoration of the Debs home, Mrs. Cooper had only scanty memory on which to rely. She had to have wooden curtain rods fabricated for the living room, she stripped her own home of furnishings associated with the Debs brothers, and she had to guess.

"AN OLD friend of the family asked me what color wallpaper I had chosen for the dining room. I told her it was green and white, and she said: 'You know, that's the color it was'," says Mrs. Cooper.

The Debs house at 451 North Eighth Street came into existence in 1890, five years after he and Kate were wed, and 15 years after he launched his career as secretary of Vigo Lodge, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. Like Debs himself, the house was controversial. Kate was from a well-to-do family — almost of the capitalistic class Debs fought all his life. In her honor, Debs installed such fancy touches as blue tile around the dining room fireplace. Critics said it was too aristocratic.

About the same time Debs took his first union post, he also helped organize and headed the Occidental Literary Club of Terre Haute. His first speech was before that group in honor of Patrick Henry. Debs considered it a fiasco and sneaked home through alleys. But it prompted a determination to learn to speak, a talent Debs mastered well enough to gain national adulation, although it brought him to a cell.

The Literary Club also brought him his first brush with the foes of rights for women. Debs invited Susan B. Anthony to Terre Haute to expound on women's suffrage. "It would not have required any great amount of egging on to have excited the people to drive her from the community," Debs later recalled, describing their walk from the train station. "Even my friends were disgusted with me for piloting such an 'undesirable citizen' into the community."

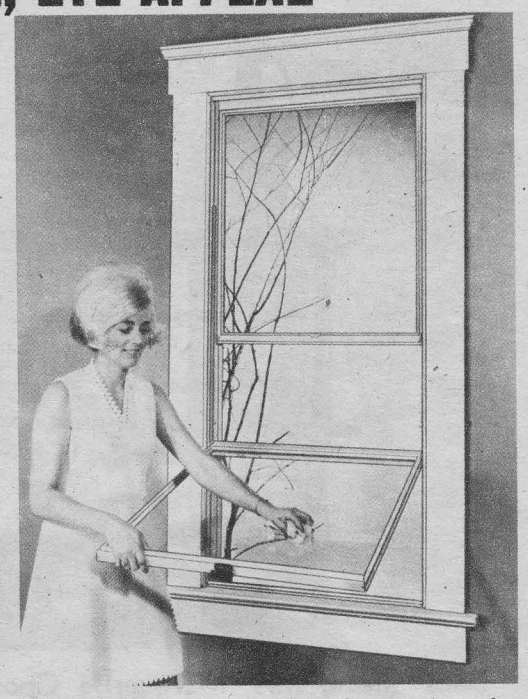
Twenty-five years later woman's lot was little better. Susan Anthony, then in her 80s, was told by Debs that socialism would give them suffrage. But she replied, "Give us suffrage and we'll give you socialism."

"I am glad to align myself with a party that declares for absolute equality between the sexes," Debs

**Continued on Next Page**


# NU-SASH . . . A NEW DIMENSION IN HOME COMFORT, CONVENIENCE, EYE APPEAL

**BEFORE** — With old windows, perching on sills to clean outside glass was difficult and dangerous.



**AFTER** — Tilt-in feature of Nu-Sash makes window cleaning a snap. Costly upkeep is eliminated.

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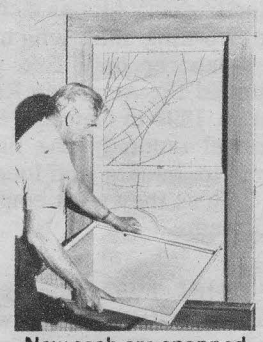

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# DEBS:

Continued from Page 75

Debs' niece, Mrs. Marguerite Cooper, guided restoration of his home, including this kitchen.

wrote. "Anything less than this is too narrow for twentieth-century civilization, and too small for a man who has a right conception of manhood."

AS ASSISTANT EDITOR of the locomotive firemen's magazine, Debs even opened a ladies' department, which approved dress reform with "a dualistic form of attire for the lower as well as the upper limbs." That seemed to translate into trousers. Fans of the pants suit may note Debs favored new woman, bicycles and bloomers and, as to the bloomers, he noted:

"They seem cool and comfortable and there is something about the air of the girl who wears them that reminds me of the Declaration of Independence."

As might be expected, Kate, a fastidious, independent woman with her own bank account, advocated women's rights and said so in an article:

"When our economic conditions are made what they should be and women cease marrying to be provided for because their wages do not enable them to live as human beings should, then will the divorce question be solved. Marriage then will be founded on its only true basis, love."

With male votes, Debs was elected Terre Haute city clerk twice as a Democrat. In his first term he refused to collect fines levied against prostitutes, considering them creatures of social circumstances.

As a representative to the Indiana General Assembly, he found disillusionment. The compromise and favoritism of Hoosier politics ill suited Debs' reformation temperament and he vowed never to run for political office again. Among his disappointments were bills to end racial discrimination and to extend suffrage to women. Both bills were defeated.

Also disillusioning was the factionalism of the various rail unions. Debs urged them to form into a single union. Unsuccessful in his pleas, he left the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, agreeing to continue editing the brotherhood's magazine. (Critics later claimed it a conflict of interest. They also were later to decry him as a champion of the working man who had worked as a laborer only five years.) He founded the American Railway Union in 1893 in Chicago, the first industrial union in the nation, open even to miners and longshoremen as long as they were employed by a railroad.

WITHIN TWO months the ARU was in a strike, one in which Debs took a pretty conservative view for a radical. He felt the fledgling organization was unready for a strike. But as more and more locals joined the walkout against the Great Northern Railway, he led the battle as the union president. In 18 days, with the railroad at a standstill, most union demands were met.

A year later it was a different story. Charging that George Pullman exploited workers in the town owned and operated by Pullman, the ARU boycotted Pullman cars! Great bitterness and misunderstandings marked the strike. Although the Illinois governor didn't call for them, Federal troops were sent to Chicago and an injunction was issued against the union officers. Violation of the injunction sent Debs and three others to jail and made him a national celebrity.

The strike opened a national debate on injunctions, industrial unionism and social reorganization which continues today.

In fact, in 1923, a quarter century later, compulsory arbitration was the subject for debate by speech students at Wiley High School in Terre Haute. Ned A. Bush Sr., now executive vice-president of the Debs Foundation, which maintains the Debs home, was on the negative team. His teacher suggested the team talk to Debs, ill and at home in Terre Haute, working at times from his office on U.S. 40.

Bush hesitated to intrude into Debs' office. "But he gave us that Eisenhower grin," recalls Bush. "He had a grin just like Eisenhower. He talked for probably an hour and he gave us a variety of pamphlets he thought would be helpful."

Some of the pamphlets are in the restored home, still in the high glass cabinet which was part of his office furnishings. It and his desk are permanently loaned to the Debs home by the Vigo County Historical Society.

"It probably was one of the high points of my life," says Bush, "but I was too stupid to take notes."

ALTHOUGH labor questions continued after the Pullman strike, the American Railway Union did not. It was destroyed. Debs personally assumed a $22,000 debt, paying it off in 18 years. Most of it was paid by his lecture fees. In an era when people attended speeches with almost the frequency they watch TV today, Debs gave as many as seven two-hour talks a week on social reform and the socialist doctrine.

While Gene hit the lecture circuit, Theodore, his wife and small daughter (Mrs. Cooper) moved to Chicago to run the Social Democratic Party headquarters — mostly off the proceeds of Theo's watch. It was pawned so many times Theo's wife claimed if you dropped it, it would go to the shop.

Mrs. Cooper has no recollection of the Chicago days. "I was a little girl. My memories are more or less here (Terre Haute)," she says. "I was too small to know what it was all about. Mother was a homemaker. She was not involved. She was in the background."

Debs was not. In 1900, 1904, 1908 and 1912 he was the socialist candidate for president, campaigning with a zeal which sometimes sent him to bed, ill and exhausted. Lumbago, rheumatism and chronic headaches plagued him. So did threatening letters which included pictures of blood-dripping daggers, exploding revolvers and fuse-sputtering bombs. Between campaigns, in 1906, his mother died "and the world has never been the same to me since," he said.

From other troubles he kept aloof. Biographers have discovered that Debs was either unconscious of what went on in his family, or ignored it. Kate resented Theodore, feeling that the brother was sponging off Gene. Theodore, in turn, appeared to feel that Kate was a rebel who rocked the boat of the rebels.

"We were busy," recalls Mrs. Cooper. "We never did see very much of Kate. As you grow up, younger people are not always interested in what the adults do — any more than they are today."

MRS. COOPER got a degree, then went to the University of Chicago and Columbia University for advanced study, then to Ball State University to teach home economics. Theodore, as much a believer in equal rights for women as his brother, encouraged Mrs. Cooper. "They wanted me to go on and do what I wanted to do," she recalls.

"Being an only child, I guess I'd kind of been with my mother. I was brought up on certain duties. I

liked to sew and I liked to cook and I suppose that led me into doing what I did when I went to study," she says.

By 1916, compromise elements in the Socialist Party offended Debs. He opposed soft-pedalling revolution and rejected efforts to make the party appeal to the middle class to win its votes. Rejecting a presidential candidacy, he nonetheless agreed, reluctantly, to be the socialist candidate for Congress from Terre Haute. He lost — had not expected to win.

By 1917, events in Debs' life had conspired to prepare him for his famous antiwar speech. To begin with, his father had named Gene after two of his idols, Eugene Sue and Victor Hugo, whose writings were of social protest and romantic views of life. Gene had sopped up those and other books his father loved (when sight failed Gene's father, he read to him). Debs was such a humanitarian he found it difficult to criticize any man personally.

To such a character the Civil War and its aftermath — in fact, all violence — was repugnant. "I am opposed to any tactics which involve stealth, secrecy, intrigue, and necessitate acts of individual violence for their execution," he wrote.

Opposition to capitalism and industrialism fed his pacifism. Persuit of Villa by American troops he termed a war for Wall Street and he likewise attacked the European conflict and the nation's growing involvement. He even censured the Bolsheviks for the violence which accompanied their revolution, although he later admitted it may have been necessary.

UNDER A newly passed Espionage Act, numerous radicals were arrested for antiwar statements, but speeches by Debs were curiously ignored — until June 16, 1918, at Canton, O. There he addressed a crowd which included Federal agents taking notes (one admitted at the trial that he couldn't keep up with Debs and only got a sentence here and there).

The Ohio speech didn't contain many of the war references Debs often had made: "There is much talk at the present time of standing by the president. I am willing to stand by the president if he stands for the things I want, but when I look at the gang that stands behind the president, I know it isn't my crowd," he had said. And: "Any nation that today prepares for war incites war and slaughter."

Instead, Debs attacked what he considered curbs on freedom, democracy and self-government. He accused the Supreme Court of a kind of "crap game" in declaring the child labor law unconstitutional. He said wars were declared by the master class, but fought by the subject class.

The Espionage Act had been expanded to include profane, scurrilous and abusive language about the government. On that basis Debs was seized, tried, convicted and imprisoned April 12, 1919. It was really what he wanted, a personal demonstration against the war. Debs had unfailing faith that things would turn out all right, that his burdens were his lot.

But prison was a little more than he may have expected. In a climate of war fever, when the Terre Haute papers were not alone in recommending the firing squad for dissenters, his prison life was harsh, the food bad, the atmosphere murderously depressing. Even the great freedom given him did not overcome the surroundings. From his cell he waged the 1920 campaign for president and the "flaming revolutionist" No. 9653 got more than a million votes. But when he emerged his health was broken.

"Father went down to meet him," Mrs. Cooper recalls, remembering Gene's release Christmas Day, 1921. He visited President Harding, who had commuted the sentence, before coming home from Atlanta. "Mother and I went to Richmond, met them there and came on home with them. When we met them, there was absolutely no bitterness in him. He always said you could always find good people."

AFTER PRISON, Debs' life was in twilight. He was so ill that the insistent stream of visitors to his Terre Haute home disturbed him.

**Continued on Next Page**


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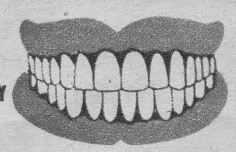

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# DEBS:

Continued from Page 77

Mrs. Cooper took the dining room furniture, which had been given to her parents by Debs, from her house and donated it to the foundation for the Debs home.

Some camped on his porch. Katie barred the door.

Twice Debs went to a sanitarium at Elmhurst, Ill., for a nature cure. There were a few sparks in his life. At Elmhurst he, Carl Sandburg and Sinclair Lewis, two fellow radicals, huddled around guitar music and social debate. Once Theodore, getting even for humorous potshots at him, stole all Debs' underwear.

Oct. 20, 1926, a heart attack and coma preceded death for Debs. Memorial outpourings were impressive.

Debs had made mistakes. He was naive, sentimental and, in later years, melancholy. At inappropriate moments he had gotten drunk (he liked a nip, but couldn't hold it). As an advocate of civil rights, he had urged equality for the Negro, but had opposed special legislation for them. He never had allowed expediency to overshadow his philosophies.

But he always remained remarkably true to his personal convictions and they had been wrapped in a human warmth impressive to even his most vicious enemies. He gave money away. From his Terre Haute publishing house in the early years, he gave away as many socialist publications as he sold. He literally gave away his overcoat on several occasions.

"I met a man not long ago," says Mrs. Cooper, "and he said, 'You know, I lived back of your uncle's home and he always had something in his pocket for the children. It was an apple, it was candy'."

Heywood Broun reported one man's estimate of Debs: "Gene Debs is the only one who can get away with the sentimental flummery that's been tied onto Socialism in this country. Pretty nearly always it gives me a swift pain to go around to meetings and have people call me 'comrade.' That's a lot of bunk. But the funny part of it is that when Debs says 'comrade' it's all right. He means it."

ALTHOUGH NOT a part of the public flurry of her uncle's life, Mrs. Cooper remembers vividly the years after his death when her father inherited the Debs legend.

"Dad had a great deal of correspondence. The Communists, of course, wanted to claim Gene. Gene was not a Communist and he (Theodore) was really fighting against that all the time.

"Our dining room was turned into a study, an office for Dad. Dad really was never idle. Dad read everything. If he was tired of writing, he would read or maybe go out in the yard. He loved to garden. He liked to work with tomatoes — although he never ate tomatoes. In

Debs and his wife Kate posed for the camera in Bermuda in 1926, only a few months before his death. History notes Kate was as aloof as Debs was warm.

the summer time he'd listen to the ball games."

Theodore was busy with the threads of his brother's life until he, too, died. The Wednesday before he died, in fact, he had Mrs. Cooper drive him to the station to mail a letter. Then it was Mrs. Cooper's turn.

"I took care of everything after father passed away. Stone's book (Irving Stone, who wrote a fictionalized story of Debs) was coming out at that time. I had correspondence with Stone. Then I had to acknowledge all the letters and telegrams that came in."

After 1936, when Kate died, Mrs. Cooper kept the idea of a memorial to her uncle. "I had always hoped that the home could be taken over and restored," she says.

An Indiana State University professor purchased the home, sold it in 1948 to Tau Sigma Alpha fraternity. The fraternity sold the house to another private owner, who passed it to a contractor. He made it into apartments. Thus, when the Debs Foundation purchased the house in 1962, the historic mantels had been taken down, tile had been destroyed on one of the fireplaces, ceilings had been lowered and one corner of the Debs library was a restroom. The mantels were found, restored and, with Mrs. Cooper's supervision, the house was put back into history.

ITEMS FROM Debs' life flowed in — his wardrobe, which had been in pieces in a garage, files from his office, utensils from his parents' kitchen. Much furniture came from Mrs. Cooper. She gave up the dining room furniture Gene had given her parents as a wedding gift and bought new for herself.

The charter of Local 16, Gene's first union in Terre Haute, had been saved. Ledgers from the local were found and rebound. Campaign buttons turned up — one is now valued at $35 on the collector's market. A table made by a prisoner for the warden at Atlanta while Debs was in prison there found its way through several hands into the house.

It took nearly $50,000 to renovate a house built for $4,500, a princely sum at the time.

"We never know anyone until they are dead," Gene said when his mother died. "Then we understand their work and we love them for it, whether or not they succeeded."

That seems a fitting epilogue for Debs, too. Although people disagreed with his views — and still do — they came to understand his philosophy, that he really believed there was such a thing as the brotherhood of man. History now records him as, if nothing else, a reformer who always was a gentleman. He seemed to be pretty radical about that.

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DEBS GEN.

Sun. nov 7

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"To speak for labor & to appeal for humanity"; said M. D., "has always been a true transcript of my mind & heart.

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# TERRE HAUTE

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## FAMOUS PEOPLE—STATESMEN.

### EUGENE VICTOR DEBS.

Eugene Victor Debs was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1855, and died in 1926. Public attention was first centered upon Mr. Debs when, as president of the American Railway union, he won a large strike on the Greaat Northern railway. One of his first jobs was fireman on the Terre Haute and Indianapolis railroad. Later he was a wholesale grocery salesman and city clerk of Terre Haute. In 1885 he served as a member of the Indiana legislature. He was always interested in better labor conditions and took an active part in the organization of the unions. It was during 1894, while serving as an official of the union, that he, with a number of other officers served six months in jail on the charge of contempt of court.

While imprisoned in the Woodstock jail he was visited by Max Berger who interested him in socialism and gave him many books to read on the subject. His name has ever since been connected with the socialistic movement in the United States. During the years 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912 he was candidate of the socialist party for the presidency of United States. While the world war was in progress he was sentenced to ten years in a federal prison for violation of the espionage act. His pardon came December 25, 1921.

Because of his likable personality Mr. Debs commanded the respect of the unionists and radicals, even those ho did not accept his economic doctrines counted him among their friends. Many of his house guests were some of the foremost people of his time.

He was the author of several books and he possessed many autographed books with words of feliciation from his author friends.

Reference — Encyclopedias, Debs, "His life and writings and speeches."

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GEN.

# History Of Eugene V. Debs

## "A Friend of Labor"

Eugene V. Debs was born November 5, 1855, on North Fourth St. Terre Haute, due west of his later home at 451 North Eighth Street. At the age of 14 he withdrew from school and started working at the Pensylvania shops. After a short experience in the shops, he became a locomotive fireman on the Pennsylvania.

Very early in his career, he became active in organized labor. At the age of 19 he was secretary of his local in the trainmen's union, and shortly after 20 he became national secretary and organizer.

In 1893 Debs launched the American Railway Union, which in its first year obtained a membership of 150,000 workers. In 1894, the new union conducted a very successful strike against the Great Northern Railway, in sympathy for the workers of the Pullman Car Company. President Cleveland using federal troops in Chicago, broke the strike, killed the union, and was indirectly responsible for Deb's being imprisoned at Woodjstock, Illinois, for contempt of court.

In Deb's early adult life he was a Democrat. When he was just under 24 years of age (1879) he was elected City Clerk of Terre Haute, and led his ticket. His plurality was 1,137, while that of the Mayor on his ticket was only 80. Two years later, he again led his ticket and with one other, was the only Democrats elected. In 1884 he was elected to the Indiana General Assembly, and while serving in that body made the nominating speech for Daniel Voorhees for United States Senate.

While serving his six - months sentence in Woodstock jail, Debs was supplied socialist literature by Victor Berger, and he came out a socialist. From the time of his release from Woodstock to his death, the story of Debs life and that of the Socialist Party were the same. Debs was the Socialist candidate for President in 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912 and 1920. While in Atlanta Penitentiary in 1920 Debs received nearly a million votes for President. In 1916 Debs was a candidate for Congress in the old fifth Indiana district against Ralph Moss and Everett Sanders, and came out second.

After taking up Socialist activities, Debs devoted his full time to it. Although greatly interested in labor organization, especially among railroad men, he never held office in the railroad brotherhoods any more.

Debs last notable activity was his anti-war work which led to his imprisonment following a speech at Canton, Ohio, in 1918. Debs appealed his case to the United States Supreme Court, basing his defense on the Constitutional guarantee of free speech only to learn that war supersedes the constitution.

President Harding, fearing the repercussions which seemed likely if Debs died in prison (he was failing rapidly), released Debs on Christmas 1921. But is was too late. Debs was a broken old man. He never regained his health. His work was practically ended. His only notable contribution after leaving Atlanta was his writing of "Walls and Bars," a book on prison reform growing out of his experience. Debs died October 20, 1926. The laboring class of peonle will never forget this great Labor worker - - "Eugene V. Debs."

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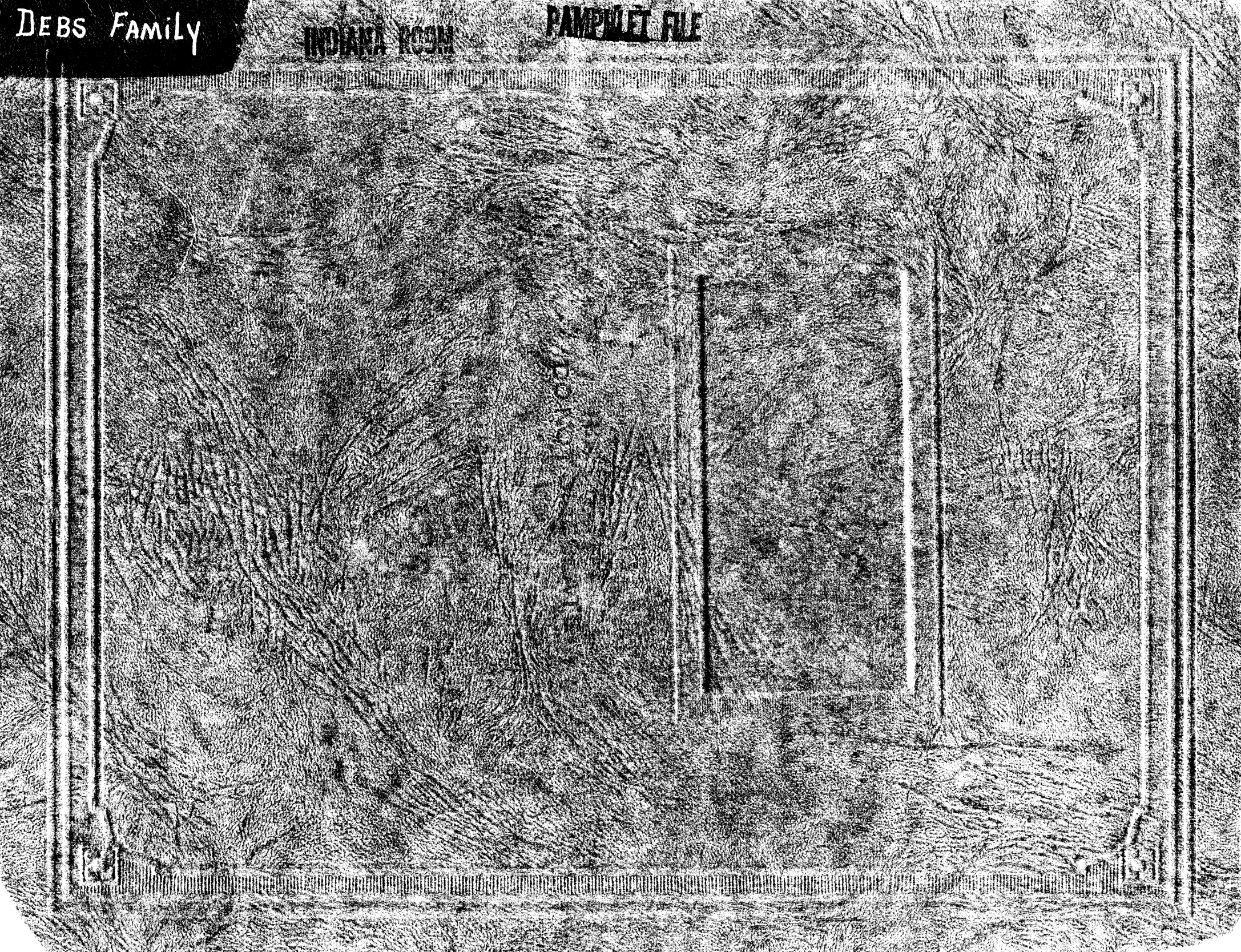

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Debs family

# DEBS FAMILY

(Taken from Souvenir Volume Golden Wedding Anniversary)

Debs--Bettrich

## FAMILY RECORD.

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### BORN.

JEAN DANIEL DEBS was born at Colmar Alsace, France, December 4th, 1820.

MARGUERITE MARIE BETTRICH was born at Colmar, Alsace, France, May 14th, 1828.

### DEPARTED FOR AMERICA.

Jean Daniel Debs left Colmar for America, November 10th, 1848; embarked at Havre, November 22nd, and arrived at New York, January 20th, 1849.

Marguerite Marie Bettrich left Colmar for America August 7th, 1849; embarked at Havre and arrived at New York September 11th, 1849.

### MARRIED.

Jean Daniel Debs and Marguerite Marie Bettrich were married in New York City, September 13th, 1849.

### LOCATED.

They left New York for Cincinnati, O., September 30th, 1850.

Left Cincinnati for Terre Haute, Ind., May 20th, 1851.

Left Terre Haute March 24th, 1854, returning to New

York and locating in Brooklyn, (Williamsburg) L. I.

Left Brooklyn September 25th, same year, returning to Terre Haute and locating there permanently.

CHILDREN.

Ten children were born to them, in the order named as follows:

Marie (deceased), born in New York.

Daughter, unnamed (deceased), Terre Haute.

Marie Marguerite, Terre Haute.

Louise, Williamsburg, N. Y.

Eugene Victor, Terre Haute.

Eugenie, Terre Haute.

Bertha Lora (deceased), Terre Haute.

Alphonse (deceased), Terre Haute.

Emma, Terre Haute.

Theodore, Terre Haute.

MARRIAGE OF CHILDREN.

The sons and daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Jean Daniel Debs contracted marriages as follows:

Marie Marguerite was married in Terre Haute to John G. Heinl of said city, October 17th, 1870.

Louise was married in Terre Haute to Henry Michel (deceased) of St. Louis, Mo., May 14th, 1879.

Eugene Victor was married in Terre Haute to Katherine Metzel of said city, June 9th, 1885.

Eugenie was married in Terre Haute to John Howard

Selby (deceased) of Greenville, Tex., November 11th, 1885.

Emma was married in Terre Haute to C. Odilon Mailloux of New York City, June 21st, 1883.

Theodore was married in Denver, Colo., to Gertrude B. Toy of said city, June 25th, 1890.

GRANDCHILDREN.

To Mr. and Mrs. John G. Heinl were born:

Frederick G.

Lorenz (deceased).

Eugene (deceased).

Herbert (deceased).

Robert Debs.

To Mr. and Mrs. Henry Michel were born:

Arthur Debs.

Harry Debs (deceased).

To Mr. and Mrs. John Howard Selby was born:

Howard Debs.

To Mr. and Mrs. C. Odilon Mailloux was born:

Mortimer Debs (deceased).

To Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Debs was born:

Marguerite Toy.

GREAT GRANDCHILD.

Frederick G. Heinl, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Heinl, and grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Jean Daniel Debs, was married in Terre Haute to Jessie P. Miller of said city, February 24th, 1896, and to them was born Marie

Miller, February 22d, 1897, who, being the first and only great-grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Jean Daniel Debs, was the sole representative of the fourth generation at the time of the anniversary celebration.

PHOTOGRAPH OF FAMILY GROUP..

On the morning of September 13th, a group photograph was taken of the entire family, consisting of four generations and nineteen members.

FAMILY DINNER.

The celebration of the Golden Wedding Anniversary was concluded with a family dinner at the Terre Haute House at 7:30 o'clock, Thursday, the 13th, after which the party adjourned to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Heinl, where the evening was spent in social intercourse.